



When in...Cape Town

Having stepped out of its apartheid closet into the constitutionally protected light of day a mere 14 years ago, gay life in Cape Town is booming. And like many teenagers, it's bold, bawdy, conflicted, and in a constant state of reinvention. Stunning physical beauty abuts gritty urbanism, a contrast that makes the city both laid-back and neurotic.

Think SoCal in South Africa. Flat-topped, cloud-covered Table Mountain plunges into sandy, Speedo-rich Clifton (its Miami-esque "third" beach and nearby Sandy Bay nudist area being the most gay-popular). Gabled Cape Dutch-style buildings tussle with glass-and-steel condos in the city bowl. While appreciating the fascinating intricacies of its multiethnic society—black, white, Cape colored (mixed-race descendents of Malay slaves), and Afrikaner, with a total of 11 official national languages—is tough in one visit, witnessing its ever-growing inclusiveness only takes a night out. With fits and starts, missteps and optimism, this teen has steadily grown into the queer capital of the Rainbow Nation, if not all of Africa. **JUSTIN OCEAN**

SUMMER FESTIVALS
WARM-WEATHER BRAAIS (BBQs, A NATIONAL OBSESSION) MAKE EVERY WEEKEND A SAUSAGE FEST, BUT THESE EVENTS BRING OUT MORE THAN THE MEAT YOU CAN EAT DURING THE OTHER SUMMER.

- 14th Out in Africa Film Festival** Nov. 1–18: Local and international entrants, panels, and community programs bring queen scenes to the screen. www.OIA.co.za
- Mother City Queer Project Festival** Dec. 20: 7,000-plus revelers deck out and tank up for a mixed-crowd charitable costume ball. MCQP.co.za
- Cape Town Pride** Feb 22–March 2, 2009: Gays going wild since 2001. CapeTownPride.co.za
- Gat Party** (Monthly in Milnerton): Two-stepping twinks *lang-arm* with Afrikaner gents to ABBA and traditional *Boeremusiek* in a BYOB gymnasium. "Gat," meaning "hole," is pronounced *hocht*.

STREET GUIDE

THE DRINK

M Bar

38 Long St.; +27-21-424-7247; MetropoleHotel.co.za

The second floor of the gay-owned Metropole Hotel epitomizes modern African chic—red ostrich skin, deep chocolaty wood, and ice cubes in the aquarium-walled urinal.

The Friendly Society

125A Waterkant St. Slide shows of chilled-out regulars smile down on an early-evening scene true to its name, especially on Saturdays, when 'fro-hawked drag maniac Odidiva takes the stage.

The Loft Lounge

24 Napier St.; +27-21-425-2647; LoftLounge.co.za

A sophisticated crowd sips martinis in a retro-modern, positively soaring space. Settle in to the second-floor couches for gorgeous Table Mountain views.

THE GROOVE

Beaulah Bar

30 Somerset Rd.; +27-21-421-6798; BeaulahBar.co.za

It may be lesbian-owned, but you wouldn't guess that by the heady mix of hipster guys and gals of all shades swaying to killer electro in the smoky boudoir-like space.

Bronx Action Bar

22 Somerset Rd.; www.Bronx.co.za

Weekends throb with ripped bartenders and thumping house at this smallish gritty anchor to the Pink Block, where shirts are shucked with an easy-cheesy familiarity.

THE BITE

Royale Eatery

273 Long St.; +27-21-422-4536; WaitingRoomBar.blogspot.com

Cheek-straining milkshakes and the city's best haute hamburgers—beef, lamb, fish, ostrich, and veg, doused in saucy toppings—fuel nights at the Waiting Room, its trilevel '70s retro-pop upstairs lounge.

Ginja

121 Castle St.; +27-21-426-2368; Ginja.cjb.net

Eclecticism epitomized: Sinfully red walls offset inventive pancontinental cuisine that pairs

South African ingredients like springbok (antelope) with Asian spices for high-wire fusion results.

THE THREADS

Iron Fist

45c Kloof St.; +27-21-422-4017; IronFist.tv

Local skate punks, surfers, and blazing alt-rockers browse in-your-face hoodies and T-shirts at the downtown outpost of this brash South African brand.

Scar Hair and Clothing

22 Kloof St.; +27-21-422-5900

Orgasmic head massages and locally designed duds make this fashionably trendy salon-boutique a one-stop makeover shop.

THE BED

The Glen

3 the Glen; +27-21-439-0086; GlenHotel.co.za

The city's only true gay hotel tarts up a tony Sea Point mansion with slick design, unique layouts, private terraces, an in-house spa, and sexy staff.

Cape Grace

West Quay Rd.; +27-21-410-7100; CapeGrace.com

Widely regarded among the continent's best sleeps, understated luxury and sublime service drip class all over a private quay just a hop-skip from the bustling Victoria & Alfred Waterfront.

THE KNEAD

The Hot House

18 Jarvis St.; www.HotHouse.co.za

Admire a sunrise from this bathhouse's Italianate terrace before losing yourself in a full-moon maze of hot 'n' slippery friskiness.

THE DAY TRIP

Western Cape Winelands

Pinotage, please! Sip serenity and enter foodie heaven with over 200 vineyards nestled in the verdant valleys of Franschoek, Stellenbosch, and Paarl—a mere 45 minutes from downtown.

Cape Point

+27-21-780-9010; CapePoint.co.za

Prod penguins and zoom by zebras on your way to Africa's ruggedly stunning westernmost tip, where the Indian and Atlantic oceans meet.